

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2573

As Passed House:
February 17, 2014

Title: An act relating to a sunrise review of regulation of wrestling events.

Brief Description: Requiring the department of licensing to conduct a review of the need for regulation of theatrical wrestling events.

Sponsors: Representative Hudgins.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Business & Financial Services: 2/4/14 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/17/14, 82-14.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Licensing to conduct a sunrise review of the need for regulation of theatrical wrestling events.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS & FINANCIAL SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Kirby, Chair; Ryu, Vice Chair; Parker, Ranking Minority Member; Vick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Fagan, Habib, Hawkins, Hudgins, G. Hunt, Hurst, Kochmar, MacEwen, Santos and Stanford.

Staff: David Rubenstein (786-7153).

Background:

The Department of Licensing (DOL) regulates boxing, martial arts, kickboxing, and wrestling events. Wrestling events are defined by statute to mean "a form of sports entertainment in which the participants display their skills in a physical struggle against each other in the ring and either the outcome may be predetermined or the participants do not necessarily strive to win, or both."

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Licensure.

Boxers, kickboxers, martial arts participants, promoters, inspectors, and others involved with the events must obtain a license from the DOL unless exempt. The DOL's ability to impose certain sanctions is dependent on whether or not events charge an admission fee.

Existing Licensing Exemptions.

There are a number of different exemptions from licensure in statute. A boxing, kickboxing, martial arts, or wrestling event is exempt if the event is conducted by any common school, college, or university and all the participating contestants are bona fide students; or an entirely amateur event, as defined.

Summary of Bill:

The DOL is required to conduct a sunrise review of the need for regulation of theatrical wrestling events, such as lucha libre. In conducting its review, the DOL must:

- consider how much regulation organizations infrequently sponsoring such events require;
- consider how much regulation noncompetitive events require;
- examine similar regulations in other states; and
- consult with professional and theatrical wrestling participants and other licensees under chapter 67.08 RCW.

The DOL must report its findings to the Legislature by November 1, 2014.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Current law makes theatrical wrestling events very expensive, and the regulations are possibly not necessary. Theatrical, acrobatic, pantomimed violence is not the same as actual adversarial combative events such as boxing. If a participant is hurt, the audience is cheated out of the grand finale. Lucha libre is growing in the United States, and it can be great fun. It should be separated from combative sports for regulatory purposes.

It can be very difficult or impossible for a wrestling promoter to put on a small show because of the regulations imposed. The DOL requires substantial fees and revenue sharing in addition to expenditures such as ambulances on standby and metal barricades. These complicated restrictions are a hindrance, and have halted plans to put on even large-scale events, such as at the Bumbershoot Festival in Seattle. This is part of the reason Washington has among the least active pro-wrestling communities in the nation. This bill will help reduce the burden that current laws impose on theatrical wrestling performers and promoters.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Hudgins, prime sponsor; Jake Stratton, Lucha Libre Volcánica; Josh Kuntz, Seattle Semi-pro Wrestling.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.